

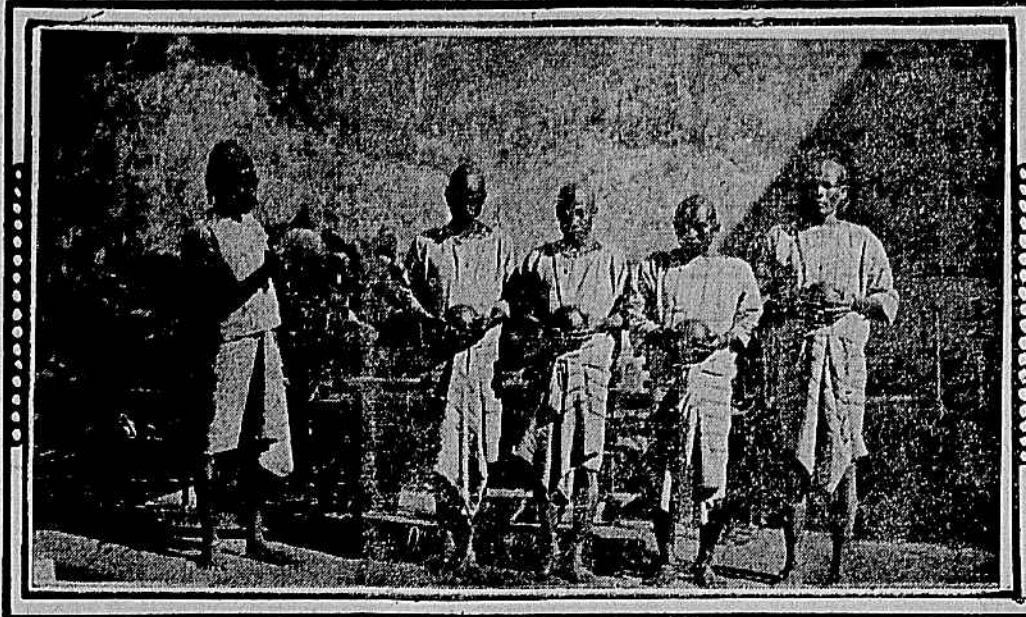
# World's Biggest Jail--2,500 Tattooed Convicts in Cells at Rangoon---Punishment of Crank---Feeding of Prisoners



PRISON OFFICIALS.  
"Inside the Jail 1 Pound Guards Everywhere."

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.  
The biggest jail in the world is here at Rangoon. It has a capacity of more than 4,000 convicts, and there are 2,500 incarcerated in it. The jail is situated right in the heart of this city of two hundred thousand. Its high-

colored brick walls are twenty feet high and they inclose many acres. Upon their corners are watch towers in which dark bearded, brown-faced East Indian soldiers, with great yellow turbans on their black heads, stand day and night ready to shoot down the prisoner who attempts to escape.



THE 32-POUND CANNON BALL PUNISHMENT.



IN THE ROPE FACTORY.  
"The Prisoners Dropped to the Ground and Folded Their Hands as We Passed."

There are other watch houses midway between and others scattered throughout the vast inclosure, keeping prisoners under surveillance both day and night. A squad of soldiers was drilling in front of the entrance when I drove up to it this morning, and inside the jail I found guards everywhere.

I was able to visit the institution through a note of introduction from the lieutenant-governor of Burma, and Captain Knapp, the superintendent, gave orders that I was to be shown every part of it and allowed to make such photographs as I wished.

I was accompanied by one of the Burmese clerks of the main office, a bright young fellow with yellow face, brown eyes and black hair about which a pink turban was tied. He wore a Khaki jacket and below this a silk shirt, wound tightly about the legs from waist to ankles. He was known to all the officials, and at his word all doors were opened and all cells unlocked. We walked together through ward after ward and visited the workshops, where more than 2,000 criminals labor from 6 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon, as they serve out the sentences.

## Among the Incurables.

The first division we entered was the one devoted to the incorrigibles. The most of the prisoners, as I shall show later, labor in companies, side by side, in great shops of various kinds. In this ward every man worked alone in his cell, shut in by thick walls. He could not see nor hear anything but the sorrowful shriek of the machinery which himself and his fellows were operating, and these noises sounded to me like the walls of the damned. Imagine a long hall fifteen feet wide, upon which perhaps three score cells opened. Each cell is about the size of a hall bedroom, lighted by a grate window up under the roof, so high that the man cannot see out. The cell is walled and floored with cement, and its only furniture is a low bench about two feet wide and eight inches high, with a coarse blanket upon it. This is the prisoner's bed. His pillow is a log of wood of about the size of a five-cent loaf of bread.

Did I say the only furniture? I am wrong! There is also a great crank in the cell, attached to a bar which extends through the walls, and which by an arrangement of gears turns a mill in the hall outside. This mill contains raw peanuts, and the prisoner within must grind them to oil. The crank is such that it exercises the whole upper part of the body. It is turned with both hands, and the man keeps it moving throughout the day.

The mill I first inspected was that of Po Sa, a Burmese, who had been convicted of an assault with intent to kill. He was bare to the waist, excepting a light iron collar about his neck, on which was a metal tag giving his number. From waist down he wore only a breech cloth, and I could see his muscles rise and fall as he strained at the crank. He acted so I thought he was shamming, and I asked the guards to let me try it myself. I took his place. The crank moved easily at first, but after a hundred revolutions every cord in my arms and chest was sore, and at two hundred I was ready to drop. Nevertheless, this man was condemned to hard labor for three months, and that to the sorrow of the sixty other mills connected with the ward.

Twenty Thousand Convicts.

With the other kinds of work carried on in such cells is the making of oil. In this the prisoners sit flat on the floor and pound upon coconut fibre to reduce it to the consistency needed for use. They keep up their pounding hour after hour and day after day, and if they stop are urged on by the guards. Such punishments are for men sentenced to hard labor for solitary confinement, of whom there are perhaps 1,000 in all Burma each year. I saw before me a report of the jail. It shows that there are now something like 13,000 convicts in the various prisons, and that 20,000 have been on their rolls this year. Of these 16,000 were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and 378 were whipped in addition. I asked my guide whether whipping was common. He replied, "No, but it is done now and then to keep the convicts in order."

The Convicts Kneel to Our Correspondent.

Leaving the solitary cells, I walked

work of this prison. Human muscle takes its place. The flour used in the kitchens is ground between millstones turned by men who sweat as they drag them around. I saw a gang at such work, and was told that each was expected to make and clean about fifty pounds of flour daily. The sweat stood on their brown skins as they worked, and they toiled hard at the grinding.

On my way through the yards I saw the pumps working. The water of the jail is raised by great barrel-like wheels so hung that as they turn they dip down into the water. To the rims of the wheels buckets are attached. These fill as the wheels enter the water, rise to the top as it goes onward, and empty out into a trough when it is turned over. The motive power for each of these wheels is a half dozen convicts, who, holding on to a bar overhead, stepped over upward, their weight turning the wheel.

This work was in the open, and it did not seem especially hard. It is the only treadmill that is now at work in the jail. The great saw and planing mill treading arrangement is still in existence, but it is idle, having been displaced by a boiler and steam. It was actively working when I visited this Rangoon jail twenty years ago, and in the eye of my mind I can still see the picture of the convicts then toiling.

This treading arrangement was running a large planing mill with all its accompanying machinery. It operated a buzz saw and scores of machines run by pulleys and wheels doing the work of a modern steam engine. Imagine a long, narrow room about thirty feet wide, in which six great cogwheels, twelve feet in diameter, are so fitted together that they make a continuous wheel one hundred feet long, running from one end of the room to the other. Let the cogs of this wheel be boards half an inch thick, so made that they form a set of steps upon which men standing can, by their weight, make the wheel move. There is a bar above to which the men can hold, and to which they can, if necessary, be chained to keep them at work. When I was here last I saw 150 men clad only in their breeches, holding on to the bar, and walking up, up, up, turning the wheel as they did so, and so by their weight running the machine shops and the planing mills. The men so punished were mostly incorrigibles, who had committed terrible crimes. They were chained on their legs, but the chains were tied to their waists, and the chains were tied to their waists, and the chains were tied to their waists.

During my stay I spent much time in the workshops. They include almost every industry known to the Burmese people. There is a large printing office with about 330 presses, and there are fully that many convicts at work there and in the type foundries and engraving establishments nearby. Each printer has an iron collar on his neck and iron rings on his ankles, and this is the case throughout the whole jail.

Next to the printing establishment is a large carpenter and cabinet-making shop, and farther on are rooms where the criminals carve wood and weave wicker furniture. This work is very artistic. We next went by groups of tailors and color rope makers, who work out in the open. All these dropped their work and folded their hands as we passed.

I asked as to the earnings of the prisoners. They are considerable. Most of the criminals are sentenced to hard labor, and the expenses of the jails are largely paid by the sales of their work. They manufacture all sorts of things much of the government department is doing binding and make weapons and chains used in the jails. I saw scores of prisoners in the blacksmith shop forging swords and dirks to be used by the men who guard them, and also shaping iron collars similar to those they had on their necks.

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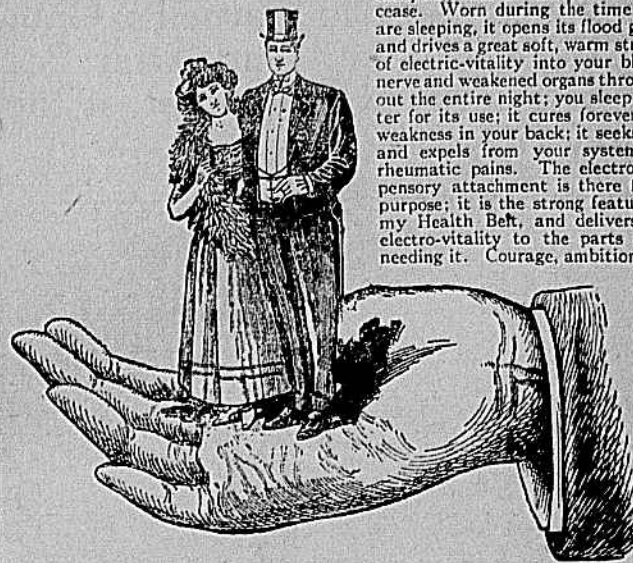
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certain amount of money for rations, each man doing his own cooking.

It takes something like 16,000 military policemen to keep the Burmese people in order, and in addition there is a civil police which numbers about 14,000. The military police has European officers in command of each battalion, and the men are largely East Indians. The native Burmese do not make good policemen, although some of the natives of the hill tribes have proved fairly good.

As to the civil police, every district has its own force, made up of the natives. Training schools for such men have been established in many localities, and the British are endeavoring to have the natives police themselves, as it is, crimes of violence are decreasing, although thefts of cattle and other things are still common. A close watch is kept upon all vagrants, and villages are fined if they harbor criminals or do not maintain a good police force. The system of keeping track of bad characters, by photographs and finger prints is well known here, and many of the natives have been detected thereby.

The Courts of Farther India.

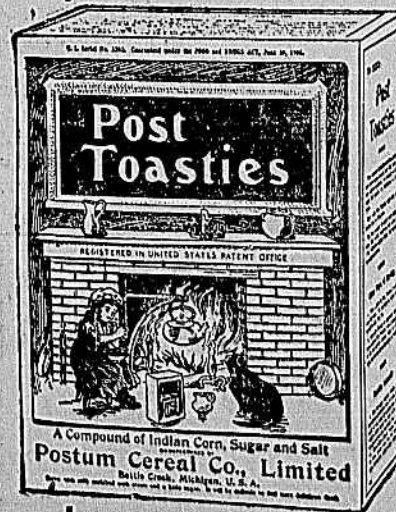
The British have established good courts all over Burma. The laws in force are modeled upon those of India, and upon the statutes of England, as well as upon the laws of the Hindus and Mohammedans. In every case the judges take into consideration the native customs and rules of the tribe or caste to which the criminal belongs, and through their equity, justice is fairly well administered. The costs of the courts are now more than a million dollars a year, and litigation is said to be decreasing.

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The Burmese as Convicts.

I am told that the Burmese make fairly good prisoners. They are high strung and proud and will defend the drop of a hat. They are not backward about getting into trouble, but once in jail are amenable to the laws. The number of convicts is large in comparison with the population of the country. The jail population is now more than one of the thousand of the actual number of citizens. This includes what are known as the civil prisoners—men who have been incarcerated for debt. There is a special department of the Rangoon jail for such offenders. They are allowed a

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